

日米協会会長賞

加瀬 瑠音さん 江戸川学園取手高等学校 1 年

茨城県

皆さんは人と話す時、自分のことをなんと呼びますか？日本の文化は非常に面白く、一人称がたくさんあります！その面白さに気づかせてくれたのは、周囲から変だと言われ続けてきた自分の個性と英語との出会いでした。

Fashionable Language

Everyone makes choices every day: what they wear, what they listen to, and what they eat. But do they choose what they call themselves?

I've had a habit of calling myself "boku" since I was young. I don't know why I started it, but it's a symbol for me to express myself and to be like "me". Before, I was often seen as a stranger, but I didn't want to stop saying "boku". Even though I was hurt because of it, I was just using the most self-like first-person pronoun.

When I was in elementary school, one classmate asked me, "Why do you say 'boku'? You are a girl, aren't you?" I could say nothing. Also, I practiced "watashi" when I gave a speech in public because I was a leader of the school. I felt like I wasn't myself. One day, I heard a boy whisper, "Maybe she likes girls." His voice sounded like he was laughing. That night, I cried in my bed. I realized I shouldn't have said "boku", but I couldn't stop. If I did, I felt I might not be myself anymore. Why do they criticize me? Why am I a girl? I hated my body as it grew into a girl. I kept thinking then, "they speak ill of me because I'm a girl. If I were a boy, I would accept calling myself 'boku'..."

But wait, English speakers just say "I". This was my first encounter with a different way of seeing gender through language. Have you ever wondered how to say "watashi" or "boku" in English? The answer is just "I". English has no gender in first-person pronouns. Contrary to that, Japan has various ways to call yourself, which differ according to gender. At first, I was dissatisfied with the way Japanese first-person pronouns were used. But through these experiences, I realized it was just wrong.

When I entered junior high school, I met a girl who called herself "ore". I was surprised and thought that she was the same as me. She was a serene girl but didn't seem to care about what others thought. I was encouraged by her behaviors. Also, my friends in high school even use "oira" jokingly, a first-person pronoun which was used in old Japan. We laugh when we use it. Is it blamed by anyone? No, it isn't. I had lived in a world which didn't accept me and treated me as a stranger before. But now I live in a new world where my friends can use "oira" when they talk jokingly, and a girl can use

"boku" without any stress. Japanese speakers can call themselves their favorite first-person pronouns and choose the pronoun that fits how they feel at the time. It is the same as the way everyone can wear various clothes which they like. Sometimes, I think it is fashionable! How beautiful it is to live in my identity by using my favorite first-person pronoun!

I think English is one of the cultures closest to us. Learning English is not only an education in Japan, but also an opportunity which gives us new ideas. When I realized English has no gender in first-person pronouns, I thought that if I were an American girl, I wouldn't feel that pain. But now, I'm glad that I'm a Japanese girl! Thanks to English, I realized Japan has different first-person pronouns, and they are used by many people regardless of gender. And now, I can say "boku" proudly.

Encountering another culture gave me a new perspective through which I could see my own culture.